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ABSTRACT

In the literature of feminist pedagogy, four interconnected strands emerge: (1) horizontal, rather than vertical classroom structure; (2) inclusion of the subjective, not just the objective; (3) the importance of context; and (4) a need to overcome the oppression that females face. Each of these strands is discussed in this paper, and connections with invitational education and cooperative learning are explored. Similarities between these three perspectives on education exist, including similar implementation problems. Resistance from teachers and students may be among these problems. In addition to cooperative learning and invitational education, other perspectives on education may be compatible with feminist pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy helps educators to see problems, such as hierarchical classrooms, a ban on the subjective, and a lack of context, from a fresh perspective. Thirty references are included in the bibliography. (IAH)

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# A BRIEF LOOK AT HOW FEMINIST PEDAGOGY INTERRELATES WITH INVITATIONAL EDUCATION AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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**Purpose**

Our motivation for writing this paper is to connect two areas of education that we are somewhat knowledgeable about - Invitational Education and Cooperative Learning (Jacobs & Ilola, 1990) - with an area we want to learn more about - Feminist Pedagogy. The format of this paper will be to first define Invitational Education and Cooperative Learning. Then, we will discuss what we have learned about Feminist Pedagogy and, in the process, discuss ways in which Invitational Education and Cooperative Learning resonate with Feminist Pedagogy. Next, we briefly discuss some common obstacles that these three perspectives may face. Finally, we suggest that search for linkages is incomplete.

**Definition of Invitational Education**

Perhaps the best source for a definition of Invitational Education is found in Inviting School Success (Purkey & Novak, 1984). Drawing major inspiration from humanistic learning theory, Invitational Education emphasizes the need for teachers and other participants in the school environment to "invite students to see themselves as able, valuable, and self-directing" (Purkey & Novak, 1984, p. xiii).

**Definition of Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative Learning draws on many learning theories (Jacobs, 1990). Thus, arriving at a commonly accepted definition is highly problematic. Davidson (1990, pp. 8-9) developed two lists of critical attributes: one which he believes everyone working in the field would agree on; the other with attributes that are integral to some Cooperative Learning approaches but not to others.

The first list of critical attributes, the ones Davidson believes are generally agreed upon, is made up of a) a "task for group discussion and resolution (if possible)"; b) "face-to-face interaction"; c) "an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual helpfulness within each group"; and d) "individual accountability". The second list of attributes key to some Cooperative Learning approaches but not others is a) "heterogeneous or random grouping"; b) "explicit teaching of social skills"; c) "structured mutual interdependence". (Beyond the scope of this paper is a discussion of possible distinctions between Collaborative and Cooperative Learning.)

**Definition of Feminist Pedagogy**

In our readings on feminist pedagogy, four interconnected strands emerge: (1) horizontal, rather than vertical, classroom structure; (2) inclusion of the subjective, not just the objective; (3) the importance of context; and (4) a need to overcome the oppression that females face. Below, each of these strands of Feminist Pedagogy is discussed and connections with Invitational Education and Cooperative Learning are explored.

**Feminist Pedagogy - Strand One: Horizontal vs. Vertical Pedagogy**

Feminist Pedagogy rejects traditional pedagogy as authoritarian in two ways. First, teachers alone are charged with structuring classroom activities. Second, teachers know all (Bezucha, 1985) and, as in Freire's (1970) banking model, have the responsibility to deposit the accumulated knowledge of "mankind" into students' heads. Miller (1985, p. 198) calls this the "peacock" model of teaching in which teachers strut their stuff to "dazzle the hens."

In contrast to this hierarchical model in which power and knowledge reside with the

teacher at the top and flow vertically down to students, Feminist Pedagogy stresses more egalitarian classroom relations and gives students an important place in constructing knowledge. In other words, dialogue replaces hierarchy (Annas, 1987); listening, questioning, and trying to understand replace passing judgment and criticizing (Goulston, 1987) and knowledge as fluid and co-constructed replaces knowledge as fact, handed down by authorities (Stanger, 1987).

This more horizontal arrangement of classroom relations does not mean teachers abandon "all claims to power and authority" (Culley, 1985, p. 215). Many advocates of Feminist Pedagogy argue that, while renouncing the tyranny of traditional models, teachers should use their experience and skills to help structure fruitful learning experiences. Indeed, teachers usually do have more scholarly, pedagogical, and personal knowledge. Teachers have a responsibility to share this greater knowledge with their students (Culley, 1985; Friedman, 1985; Ryan, 1989; Schniedewind, 1983).

In a similar vein, Bayer (1990) sees teachers as collaborators, facilitators, fellow learners, and coaches. She views teachers as connectors between the class and the wider body of knowledge and experience on the topic. The emphasis in Invitational Education on inviting students to feel responsible seems in harmony with this horizontal strand of Feminist Pedagogy. In the traditional classroom, teachers seem to be saying to students, "We can't trust you to know how to act in school. Thus, we need to impose our rules on you. Further, you're not bright enough to figure out course content for yourselves. Thus, we have to tell you everything you need to know."

Practitioners of Invitational Education reject what Purkey and Novak (p. 90) label the "efficient factory" model of education which, for example, calls for mass production, centralized control, and workers as functionaries. Instead, Invitational Education calls for teachers to perceive students as responsible, capable individuals and to show them the respect they accordingly deserve by inviting students' full and active participation in the school.

Similarly, Cooperative Learning very much urges a restructuring of classroom relations. With Cooperative Learning, the spotlight is no longer on teachers performing for their students. Instead, students spend a lot of time in groups learning with each other. Teachers are still very much part of the cast, but now their's is more of a supporting role, helping students learn from each other, as well as from other sources.

**Feminist Pedagogy - Strand Two: Importance of the Subjective**

Closely tied to Feminist Pedagogy's advocacy of a more horizontal classroom power structure is its view of the importance of the subjective in learning. Traditional teaching focuses almost exclusively on the objective and impersonal, seeking to ban emotion, personal experience, and opinion from the classroom. Students' role is to master the material handed down to them by their teachers, in the form it is handed down to them. Students are not to react to it, comment on it, or personalize it.

One of the wellsprings of Feminist Pedagogy has been the teaching of composition. In this field, belief in a role for the subjective goes hand in hand with an emphasis on process rather than product, because the act of discovering meaning, a key dimension of a process approach to composition, is a personal one.

Caywood and Overing (1987) stress this relation as they as link strand one and two of Feminist Pedagogy:

> The model of writing as product is inherently authoritarian. The act of writing becomes a suppressed and private activity of the self which is eventually divorced from the product made public. As a result, certain forms of discourse and language are privileged: ... the impersonal, rational voice [is] ranked more highly than

> the intimate, subjective one. The valuing of one form over another requires that the teacher be a judge, imposing a hierarchy of learned aesthetic values, gathered from ideal texts, upon the student text. (p. xii)

Feminist Pedagogy draws on the principle in cognitive learning theory that knowledge is not a collection of isolated bits of information, but a web of interrelations. Thus, we learn by connecting the new with the old (e.g., Bruner, 1957). Feminist Pedagogy stresses the need for students to draw on their own personal and intellectual experiences to build a "satisfying version of the subject, one that they can use productively in their own lives" (Maher, 1985, p. 30).

Part of the stereotype of females demeans them as people dominated by their emotions, i.e., the subjective, and unable to think logically, i.e., objectively. Males who value the subjective are also derided, their masculinity and mental acuity questioned. Feminist Pedagogy seeks to promote this putative weakness into a strength: only by the incorporation of the subjective can effective and humane learning occur.

Invitational Education's humanistic roots are very congruent with the emphasis in Feminist Pedagogy on the subjective. Purkey and Novak frequently point out the central role that affect plays in learning. In particular, they urge educators to be very concerned with helping students build positive self-concept.

Some, but not all, approaches to Cooperative Learning draw inspiration from humanistic learning theory. Indeed, Cooperative Learning approaches vary greatly in the importance they place on the subjective, although research findings for all the main approaches show gains on affective variables, such as self-esteem and liking for others. Further, Cooperative Learning provides - and sometimes explicitly scripts (e.g., Hythecker, Dansereau, & Rocklin, 1988) opportunities for students to link their experiences and feelings to the material they are learning.

**Feminist Pedagogy - Strand Three: The Importance of Context**

The third strand of Feminist Pedagogy is bound closely with the importance of the subjective. This third strand focuses on the need for context. Here, context has two meanings.

First, following the work of Carol Gilligan (1982), Feminist Pedagogy stresses interpersonal relations. Gilligan's work on stages of moral development challenged that of Lawrence Kohlberg (1964) who had said that females' moral reasoning was generally inferior to that of males. Kohlberg found that males highlighted abstract principles of justice, whereas females put more emphasis on context, i.e., the effects on individuals. Gilligan sees these different ways of reasoning not as inferior or superior to one another, merely as different. Part of this emphasis on context is reflected in a concern for "ambiguities, pluralities, processes, continuities, and complex relationships" rather than the "categories, dichotomies, roles, stasis, and causation" of traditional pedagogy (Penelope & Wolfe, 1983 p. 126).

The second meaning of context that is important for feminist pedagogy is the context of the teaching situation, e.g., the gender, ethnicity, class, interests, past learning and other experiences of teachers and students (Ryan, 1989). Each student views the world from their own context. Pedagogy must seek to help students find the language to link class content to their own reality. According to Annas (1987, pp. 3-4), "The beginnings of contemporary feminism are rooted in a recognition of the connections between expression and epistemology, naming and knowing, seeing and saying, forms of consciousness and the content of women's experience."

Proponents of Invitational Education agree with a focus on both meanings of context.

While Purkey and Novak place most of their emphasis on interpersonal relations between students and others, particularly teachers, they also realize the importance of student-student relations. A cooperative spirit and a sense of belonging are key qualities of their vision of an inviting school (p. 96-97).

Another key quality of inviting schools, respect for individual uniqueness (p. 96), resonates with this second meaning of context. It urges educators to consider the sociological matrix in which students, teachers and teaching are embedded. For example, Purkey and Novak urge educators to learn about their students' backgrounds and, at the same time, to avoid stereotypical prejudices.

Cooperative Learning also interrelates well with this third strand of Feminist Pedagogy. Many approaches to Cooperative Learning place great emphasis on helping students develop the skills necessary to successful person-person interaction. Stanger (1987) believes that successful small group collaboration brings to students a feeling of connection to others. The importance of connectedness is a key idea in Gilligan's work on females' values.

Additionally, most Cooperative Learning approaches urge the formation of heterogeneous groups based on characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, past achievement level, and interest. In this way, these approaches recognize the variety of contexts from which students come to the classroom. Heterogeneous grouping hopes to use this variety to improve education by providing students with a mix of perspectives and to overcome ill feeling which differences might produce by providing an environment in which students from disparate backgrounds help each other reach a common goal.

**Feminist Pedagogy - Strand Four: Elimination of Female Oppression**

The fourth strand of Feminist Pedagogy, eliminating oppression of females, can be seen as a key goal of the other three. Educational settings with a horizontal power structure, an important place for the subjective, and an appreciation of context are more congruent with learning by females, as well as males, and with the acquisition by all students of values inconsistent with the maintenance of oppression of females and others.

Several approaches may be taken toward removing the barriers females face. One, schools can include content and activities specifically focussed on female emancipation (Rosser, 1989; Schniedewind, 1983). Another approach looks at teacher behaviors which encourage or discourage equal female participation (Hall & Sandler, 1982). Third, and most broadly, Feminist Pedagogy calls for a new type of classroom, one based on the three other strands outlined above.

Invitational Education appears to connect with the second and third approaches that Feminist Pedagogy takes toward overcoming the oppression females suffer. Purkey and Novak stress the effect that teachers' perceptions of students have on students' self-concepts. Thus, for example, advocates of Invitational Education would counsel teachers to avoid behaviors which stereotype females' abilities and futures. Additionally, as discussed above, Invitational Education is congruent with many aspects of the broad realignment of traditional classrooms envisioned in the first three strands of Feminist Pedagogy.

Does Cooperative Learning help eliminate the oppression females suffer? Cooperative Learning seems more congenial to female learning styles than do traditional, teacher-fronted instructional formats. Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (1986) collected sociometric data regarding the desirability of female work partners in a study that compared cooperative, competitive and individualistic computer-assisted instruction. Even though males in all three conditions perceived computers as being more of a male domain than

did females, students who had worked together in the cooperative condition nominated significantly more female classmates as desirable future work partners that did students in the other two conditions. Their cooperative learning experience increased the perceived status of females in the "male" area of computers. However, in their latest review of research on Cooperative Learning, Johnson and Johnson (1989, p.47) found no significant differences in either the achievement or the productivity of females and males in cooperatively, competitively, or individualistically structured classrooms. Perhaps, this finding could be explained by saying that Cooperative Learning and Feminist Pedagogy are beneficial to males as well as females.

Another area in which Cooperative Learning may be hypothesized to aid in removing impediments to full participation by females would be in improving interpersonal relations. Cooperative Learning has been found to increase perspective-taking ability and improve relations between disparate groups, e.g., blacks and whites (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Thus, Cooperative Learning might help males better appreciate females' views. To our knowledge, no research review has examined these variables with respect to female-male relations.

**Similar Problems**

Given the similarities between Invitational Education, Cooperative Learning, and Feminist Pedagogy, it is likely that they share similar implementation problems. A key window for us onto these problems is the work of Rich (1990) who investigated reasons why teachers are reluctant to implement cooperative learning.

Incorporating the work of Palincsar, Stevens, and Gavelek (1988), Rich believes there are two dimensions along which many educators' belief systems and teaching styles conflict with implementation of cooperative learning. The first dimension concerns how much emphasis schools should place on the personal and social, rather than academic. This seems related to strands two and three of Feminist Pedagogy (the importance of the subjective and of context). Teachers who feel that anything not directly related to academics is a waste of time will resist any of the three perspectives on education discussed in this paper.

The second dimension along which our three perspectives are likely to meet resistance involves the question of the source of student learning: the teacher alone or the teacher and interaction with peers. Studies such as that by Bussis, Chittenden, and Amarel (1976) have consistently found that the majority of teachers believe in the kind of vertical classroom structure which strand one of Feminist Pedagogy seeks to alter.

Rich and Palincsar et al. emphasize the need to educate teachers about the concepts and supporting research underlying the use of peer interaction. In other words, just teaching teachers a series of techniques will not lead to successful realization of educational change if teachers hold beliefs in conflict with this change.

The same lesson can be applied to students. We cannot expect them to adapt successfully to the kinds of innovations that Invitational Education, Cooperative Learning, and Feminist Pedagogy imply, if we do not include them in on the thinking which underlies these perspectives on education. To do anything less would be inconsistent with these perspectives. All the social engineering that teachers design collapses without collaboration from students. Positive interdependence and individual accountability is, ultimately, the product of student and not teacher cognitions and behaviors.

**Why Stop At Three?**

A key purpose of this paper has to been to educate ourselves about these three perspectives on education and the links between them. Doubtless, there are links we have missed. Further, we are certain that the ideas shared by these three perspectives

are also shared with others.

For example, in a book on peace education, Reardon (1988) discusses the complementarity of feminist pedagogy and cooperative learning to peace education. Reardon sees the need for feminist transformation in education and elsewhere because she views patriarchal values as conducive to war and the milieu which generates more war. Cooperative learning is appropriate to peace education, according to Reardon, because it helps people form positive attitudes toward others.

Perhaps, someone with a feminist perspective would tell us that we should learn a lesson from our perception of all these similarities. Maybe we are too dualistic in our view of various educational perspectives. In our zeal to categorize, differentiate, and isolate, we have forgotten to integrate, embrace, and make whole.

**Conclusion**

Now that we have done the reading about Feminist Pedagogy, the rereading about Invitational Education and Cooperative Learning, and written this paper, what do we think about Feminist Pedagogy and how it connects with the other two areas of education discussed here? First, Feminist Pedagogy isn't only for females (Annas, 1987), and you don't have to be a feminist, female or male, to get more out of learning and teaching through the use of Feminist Pedagogy's principles. Indeed, much of Feminist Pedagogy's ideas are already incorporated in other educational emphases whose value to people of all genders and views has been shown by time and research.

Despite this overlap, our second conclusion is that Feminist Pedagogy does have something to add. It's most obvious contribution is a clear focus on the needs of females in educational settings. Further, Feminist Pedagogy helps us see problems, such as hierarchical classrooms, a ban on the subjective, and a lack of context, and their potential solutions from a fresh perspective. In this spirit, we hope this paper will encourage others who are familiar with one or two of the three areas to examine the other(s) for the clarity which an important new perspective can bring.

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